

EX-7-8539/1 ✓

30 JAN 1956

Mr. J. Walter Yeagley
Chairman, Interdepartmental Committee
on Internal Security
Department of Justice
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Yeagley:

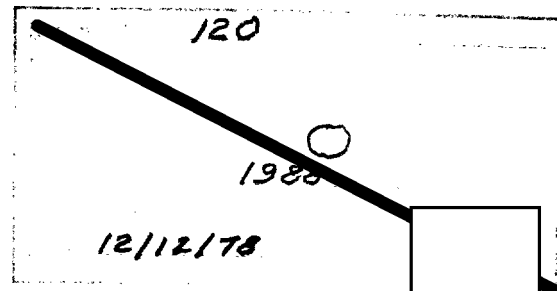
This is in response to your letter of January 26, 1956 requesting comments and suggestions on proposed changes to Executive Order 10501. Before commenting on these proposed changes, I believe a little background information on some of the problems the Central Intelligence Agency has encountered in downgrading and declassifying material might be helpful.

During the latter part of 1955 we conducted a survey of those major components producing completed intelligence reports to determine what would be gained by reviewing these reports for the purpose of downgrading or declassification. The survey disclosed that in practically every instance, completed intelligence reports cited classified individual document sources. To review completed intelligence reports, therefore, would first require a review of the cited individual documents.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that in such a review, the controlling factor in most instances is the protection of intelligence sources and methods rather than the substantive content. As you probably are aware, there were many intelligence reports originated during World War II that are still held in a classified status because of the necessity of protecting the sources. Furthermore, the fact that a series of intelligence documents represents the completion of a particular collection effort does not in many instances warrant a declassification or downgrading. The specific operation through which this particular information was obtained may still be active or working on other collection requirements.

Over and above these considerations on intelligence studies and reports, CIA is faced with an additional security problem in that practically all of its administrative information, particularly that concerning organization, functions, names, official titles, salaries and numbers of personnel employed must be carried in a classified category. This need

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is recognized in Section VII of Public Law 110, 81st Congress, 1st Session (1949) which exempts the Agency from the provisions of any other law requiring the publication or disclosure of this type of administrative information.

I would like to emphasize, however, that the foregoing does not prevent a continuing review of classified material falling into certain categories such as correspondence, general administrative letters and memoranda, and a few specific types of periodic publications; namely, those which do not cite sources. Automatic downgrading stamps have been and are being used widely in permissive instances. The Agency classification control network has been established to control the application of original classifications and to perform the function of reviewing classified material for the purpose of downgrading or declassification. Guidance on a continuing basis is furnished to the control network by the CIA Classification Control Officer and also through the medium of Agency regulatory material.

The following comments are offered on your two specific suggestions:

1. Revision of EO 10501 to provide for an annual review of material for declassification purposes appears desirable provided certain types of information pertaining to national security which retain their sensitivity for a long period of time be exempted. A requirement calling for an annual review of this type material would, in our opinion, impose on this Agency a costly and time-consuming administrative workload, without expectation of discovering much declassifiable material. It is recognized that this reasoning may not apply to other agencies.

2. Revision of EO 10501 to incorporate a broader method of automatic downgrading or declassification than that permitted by Section 4(a) would, in our opinion, tend to result in a compromise of intelligence sources and methods. I am sure you recognize the utmost importance we place upon the protection of this type of information.

With respect to unnecessary classification and over-classification, the former has presented no problem. We have, however, encountered certain difficulties with over-classification. In many of the cases reviewed a CONFIDENTIAL classification would have been sufficient rather than a SECRET

classification. Compliance with the admonition of Section 3 that "unnecessary classification and over-classification shall be scrupulously avoided" is carried out through the Agency's classification control network which provides a continuing review of classification procedures and practices, including training and guidance on a current basis.

Should you desire any further details or information on this important subject, I shall be glad to designate a representative to meet with your Committee.

Sincerely,

C. F. CASSELL
Lieutenant General, USAF
Acting Director

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OS [redacted] skh
Rewritten SA-DD/S [redacted] DLC (20 Mar 56)

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SIGNED

L. K. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

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